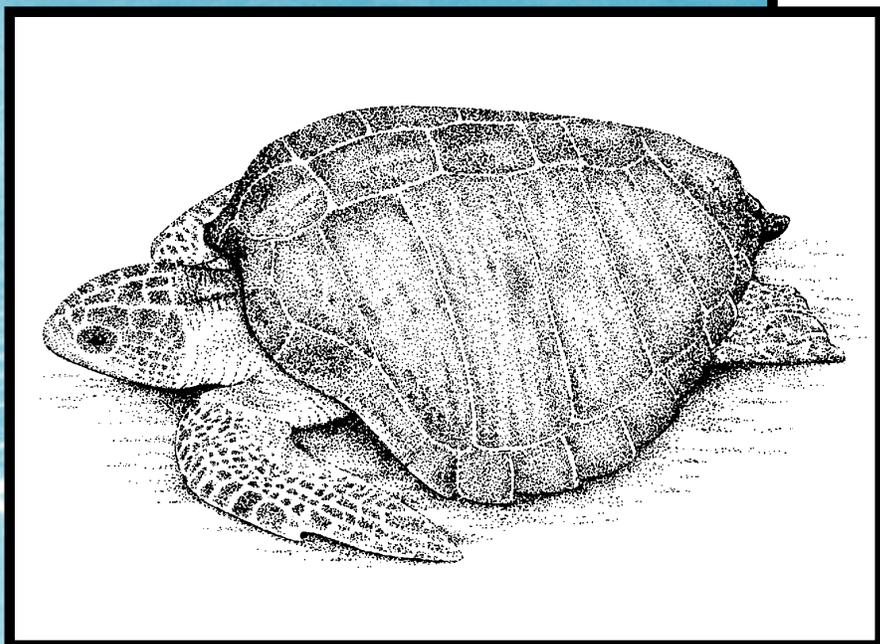


Olive Ridley Sea Turtle



by Scott Richardson



Washington Department of
FISH AND WILDLIFE
Wildlife Management Program

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains a list of endangered, threatened and sensitive species (Washington Administrative Codes 232-12-014 and 232-12-011, Appendix). In 1990, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted listing procedures developed by a group of citizens, interest groups, and state and federal agencies (Washington Administrative Code 232-12-297, Appendix). The procedures include how species listing will be initiated, criteria for listing and delisting, public review and recovery and management of listed species.

The first step in the process is to develop a preliminary species status report. The report includes a review of information relevant to the species' status in Washington and addresses factors affecting its status including, but not limited to: historic, current, and future species population trends, natural history including ecological relationships, historic and current habitat trends, population demographics and their relationship to long term sustainability, and historic and current species management activities.

The procedures then provide for a 90-day public review opportunity for interested parties to submit new scientific data relevant to the status report, classification recommendation, and any State Environmental Policy Act findings. During the 90-day review period, the Department holds one public meeting in each of its administrative regions. At the close of the comment period, the Department completes the Final Status Report and Listing Recommendation for presentation to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Final Report and Recommendation are then released 30 days prior to the Commission presentation for public review.

This is a Final Status Report for the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle. **Submit written comments on this report by August 3, 1997 to: Endangered Species Program Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia, WA 98501-1091.** The Department will present the results of this status review to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for action at the August 8-9 meeting in Richland, Washington.

This report should be cited as:

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Washington State Status Report
for the
Olive Ridley Sea Turtle

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Olive ridley sea turtles are graceful saltwater reptiles with streamlined bodies and flipper-like limbs. They measure up to 73 cm and weigh up to 45 kg. Their distribution is limited primarily to tropical oceans and beaches.

Most olive ridleys nest in large, synchronized aggregations known as arribadas. In the eastern tropical Pacific, large arribadas are found in Costa Rica and Mexico. Females typically lay two clutches, each numbering about 100 eggs, separated by 2 to 4 weeks. Eggs hatch after 7 to 10 weeks. Olive ridleys probably require more than 7 years to attain sexual maturity.

Olive ridleys are primarily carnivorous. They eat fish, shellfish, jellyfish, and other marine animals. In some areas, algae may be an important dietary component.

Threats to olive ridleys include poorly-regulated and illegal harvesting of adults and eggs, floating plastics, oil pollution, and incidental take in fishing nets. In areas where recreational boating and ship traffic are intense, propeller and collision injuries are not uncommon.

The olive ridley may be the most abundant sea turtle in the Pacific Ocean. However, the number of olive ridleys at most arribadas has declined considerably during the past 30 years or more. Currently, several hundred thousand nest along the Mexican and Costa Rican coasts. The Bay of Bengal in India also supports several hundred thousand nesters.

Ocean temperature restricts olive ridleys to waters well south of Washington. The state has only a single olive ridley record, a turtle that was found dead in Grays Harbor County. Oregon has two records.

The Mexican nesting population of the olive ridley sea turtle is listed as federally endangered under the Endangered Species Act. All other populations are listed as threatened. The National Marine Fisheries Service has suggested the Atlantic population may deserve to be uplisted to endangered.

Although Washington Administration Code 232-12-297 dictates that federally-listed species will be listed by the state, the olive ridley's range apparently does not include Washington coastal waters. It is therefore recommended that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission not list the olive ridley sea turtle as endangered, threatened, or sensitive.

INTRODUCTION

Unless otherwise cited in text, most information in this status review has been taken from three references: Mager (1985), Eckert (1993), and Pritchard and Plotkin (1995).

TAXONOMY

The olive ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is a saltwater reptile in the family Cheloniidae. Pacific and Atlantic populations are genetically distinct, but are thought to have diverged relatively recently (Bowen et al. 1993). With Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), the olive ridley forms a two-species genus. These two species apparently diverged 3 to 6 million years ago (Bowen 1991). No olive ridley subspecies are recognized.

DESCRIPTION

The olive ridley is a relatively small sea turtle. The carapace is wide, olive in color, and, when observed from the front, elevated and flat-topped with flat, sloping sides. The plastron is large and pale yellow or greenish-yellow in color. The head is large compared to most other sea turtles.

Male olive ridleys differ from females in having a long prehensile tail, a relatively soft and concave plastron, a less-pronounced lateral profile, and strong claws on front flippers (Wibbels et al. 1991). Thirteen males from Baja California measured 58.5 to 69 cm in carapace length (Marquez et al. 1976). Female olive ridleys from Pacific Central America and Mexico measured 49 to 73 cm in carapace length (Marquez 1990) and weighed 35 to 45 kg (Cornelius 1986). Size varies regionally.

Olive ridleys typically are identified by the number of vertebral and costal scutes on the carapace. Although some individuals have only five pairs of costals (as do *L. kempii*), most have divided costals, resulting in six to nine pairs. Division of the "standard" scutes occurs from the rear of the carapace and is frequently asymmetrical. Vertebral scutes are also frequently divided, as are the scales on the dorsal surface of the head. Skulls and lower jaws of *L. olivacea* and *L. kempii* also differ in several ways.

Geographic variation in olive ridleys is subtle. Specimens from the eastern Pacific Ocean are typically darker, with a more elevated shell and a greater likelihood of having five pairs of costals than those found elsewhere.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The olive ridley is found in tropical seas around the world. In the eastern Pacific Ocean, it nests from southern Sonora, Mexico, south at least to Colombia, with the largest concentrations in Costa Rica. The other major nesting site is the Bay of Bengal, India. Smaller numbers of olive ridleys nest in Malaysia, Thailand, and possibly other southeast Asian nations. Olive ridleys are rare nesters in the western Atlantic, with populations of a few hundred in Surinam and French Guiana.

At-sea distribution of olive ridleys is poorly known. In the eastern North Pacific, their range is probably limited by cold waters of the California and Humboldt currents (Pitman 1990, cited in Eckert 1993).

Olive ridleys rarely are found in waters north of southern California. A juvenile olive ridley found dead at Copalis Beach in November 1989 provides our state's only record.

NATURAL HISTORY

Reproduction

Olive ridleys tend to nest annually. Some nest alone and others nest in small colonies, but many olive ridleys form large, synchronized nesting aggregations known as "arribadas." The largest arribadas in Costa Rica and Mexico take place between August and October (Cornelius 1986, Ruiz and Marin 1988). Some small arribadas consist of 15,000 females, but the largest arribada may include up to 150,000 females.

The impetus for arribada formation is uncertain and the timing is difficult to predict. Arribadas may be precipitated by strong offshore winds or specific lunar or tidal phases. Gravid females apparently are able to wait for weeks while holding fully-shelled eggs, which may influence arribada synchrony.

Sexual maturity probably takes at least 7 to 9 years. Mating takes place at sea and is not restricted to areas near nesting beaches.

Olive ridleys may nest one, two (typical), or three times per season, and generally produce 100 to 110 eggs each time. The interval between nestings is variable, but it is about 2 weeks for solitary nesters and 4 weeks for arribada nesters. Eggs hatch in 50 to 70 days.

Arribadas may have evolved as a "predator-swamping" strategy to limit the risk of predation. In a Mexico study, predators plundered significantly more solitary nests than nests constructed during arribadas (Eckrich and Owens 1995). However, nesting during an arribada does not guarantee

maximum reproductive efficiency. For example, at a relatively undisturbed beach in Costa Rica, only about 5% of eggs laid during an arribada were estimated to have hatched.

Survivorship in olive ridleys is thought to be very low.

Mortality

The potential longevity of olive ridley sea turtles is unknown.

Olive ridley predators include humans, sharks, and, on some beaches, large cats such as jaguars and cougars (Mager 1985). Crabs, birds, mammals, and fish probably each prey upon eggs or hatchlings.

In most areas where olive ridleys nest, human exploitation of the turtles often has been intense (Mager 1985). For example, approximately 300,000 adults were taken in Ecuador from 1978 to 1981, harvest in Mexico was about 100,000 turtles per season in the early 1980s, and egg harvest in Nicaragua was estimated to be 100,000 in 1983. Exploitation in other areas has been similarly vast.

Foraging and Food

Olive ridleys are carnivores, with a diet that includes mollusks, fish, fish eggs, crabs, shrimp, rock lobsters, jellyfish, and tunicates (Fritts 1981, Mortimer 1982, Marquez 1990; cited in Eckert 1993). In some parts of the world, algae has been reported as an important food.

Movements

The great number of olive ridleys that nest in arribadas cannot be sustained by adjacent marine ecosystems, so the turtles migrate. Those that nest in Mexico and Costa Rica probably reside in oceanic habitats of the eastern Pacific Ocean during the non-reproductive periods of their life cycles.

Physiology

When they are active, sea turtles must swim to the ocean surface to breathe every few minutes. When they are resting, they can remain underwater for as long as 2 hours without breathing.

HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Olive ridleys live in tropical oceans, where they may associate with floating debris (for shelter, food, and orientation). Sea turtles benefit from oceans free of oil and plastics.

Stinson (1984, cited in Eckert 1993), working off the coast of California, found olive ridleys in 15- to 20-degree water throughout the year and in 12- to 14-degree water predominately between October and December. Olive ridleys found in water below 12 degrees were either dead or emaciated and lethargic.

For nesting, olive ridleys use sandy beaches. Their nesting success probably improves in areas with few predators and low human disturbance.

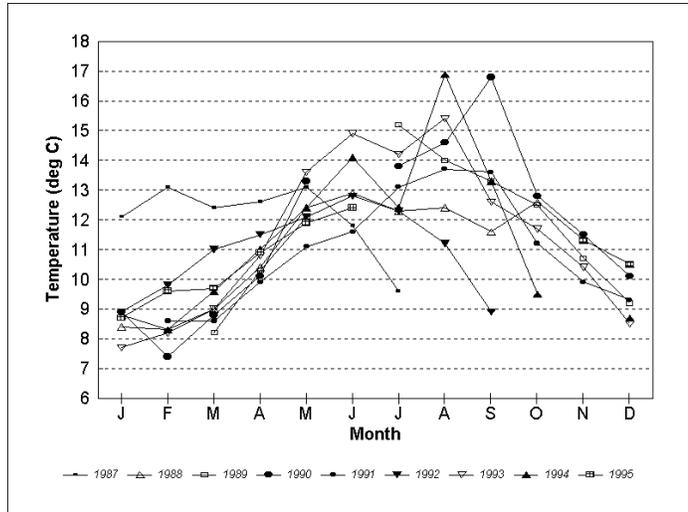


Figure 1. Average monthly sea surface temperatures off the Washington coast near the Columbia River (taken from *Mariners Weather Log*, volumes 31 to 40).

POPULATION STATUS AND TREND

The olive ridley is the most abundant sea turtle in the North Pacific, but most nesting populations are known or thought to be depleted (Groombridge 1982). The decline is suggested by reduced counts of nesting females and infrequent encounters with wild turtles. Very large arribadas occur only at two locations: the northwestern Bay of Bengal, India, and the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. In the eastern tropical Pacific, relatively small arribadas also occur along Mexican beaches.

Costa Rican beaches supporting large arribadas include Nancite and Ostional. At Nancite, the estimated nesting population declined from over 200,000 in the early 1980s to approximately 30,000 in the early 1990s. At Ostional, the population is thought to be stable or increasing slightly from its 1982 status of between 260,000 and 435,000 nesting turtles.

Pacific Mexico continues to support a few hundred thousand nesting turtles each year. Populations in some areas seem to have crashed during the 1970s, but current estimates are not substantially different than those from 20 years ago.

India beaches may support several hundred thousand nests each year.

The Atlantic nesting population numbers only a few hundred females.

Unlike certain other sea turtles, olive ridleys commonly nest in successive years. This allows population trends to be assessed more easily and with more accuracy from a few years of comprehensive nest counts.

HABITAT STATUS

The Pacific Ocean receives myriad pollutants, many of which have uncertain influence on sea turtles. In addition, phenomena such as El Niños alter sea temperature, which may affect the food web upon which olive ridleys depend. Scientists have difficulty establishing specific links between alterations in the oceanic environment and the well-being of olive ridleys.

On land, olive ridleys require clean, sandy beaches with little or no disturbance. Several arribada beaches are governmentally protected, although illegal activities may still occur. Fishing nets and other entangling items washed onto beaches can impact olive ridleys that come ashore to nest.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Legal Status

The National Marine Fisheries Service listed the “Mexican nesting population” of the olive ridley as Endangered on 28 July 1978. At the same time, all other olive ridley populations were listed as Threatened. NMFS recently suggested that the Atlantic population be uplisted to Endangered (Pritchard and Plotkin 1995).

Sea turtles are considered “protected wildlife” under Washington Administrative Code 232-12-011. Should the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission designate the olive ridley sea turtle as endangered, threatened, or sensitive, the Department would be guided by federal recovery planning efforts. The Department would also prepare an addendum to this status review, describing its goals and objectives for the olive ridley in Washington.

FACTORS AFFECTING CONTINUED EXISTENCE

Adequacy of Existing Regulatory Mechanisms

The olive ridley’s status under the Endangered Species Act affords it full protection under federal law. The species is also listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which bans trade of olive ridleys.

Legislation intended to protect turtles is in place in many parts of the turtle’s range, but enforcement is poor or non-existent.

Current and Potential Threats

When olive ridley sea turtles aggregate at arribadas, they are susceptible to industrial-scale harvest for meat, skin, and eggs. Exploitation was often intense in the past, with harvest estimates often

exceeding 100,000 adult turtles per season in several areas. Egg harvest also has been estimated to be 100,000 in some countries. Although olive ridleys are now broadly protected, illegal harvest continues in many areas.

Shrimp trawlers and longline fisheries incidentally capture olive ridleys during routine operations. Each year in the eastern Pacific, tens of thousands of turtles succumb after becoming entangled in fishing gear. Turtle Excluder Devices are expected to come into use on shrimp trawlers, which may reduce the threat of incidental take.

Olive ridleys are susceptible to harm via marine debris. They may ingest items such as plastic bags, plastic and styrofoam pieces, tar balls, balloons, and raw plastic pellets, then suffer from the interference to their metabolism or gut function. They may also absorb toxic byproducts of these pollutants.

Oil spills threaten sea turtles. Oil contamination can impair respiration, alter blood chemistry, and impede normal functioning of skin and salt glands.

Pesticides, heavy metals, and PCBs have been detected in turtles and eggs, but their effects are unknown.

In areas where recreational boating and ship traffic is intense, propeller and collision injuries are not uncommon.

Warm-water events such as El Niños may disrupt oceanic food webs, indirectly limiting survival of olive ridleys.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The olive ridley sea turtle, being largely a tropical species, has strayed into Washington waters on just a single documented occasion. The species is unlikely to occur along the Washington coast, as sea surface temperatures here are apparently too low.

Elsewhere in the species' range, olive ridleys are threatened by direct and indirect human influences, and biologists believe the population is in decline. The olive ridley has been federally listed as a threatened species since 1978.

“If a species is listed as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act,” states Washington Administrative Code 232-12-297, “the agency will recommend to the commission that it be listed as endangered or threatened [in Washington]...” However, because this species is not a proven member of the state's fauna, the Department recommends the olive ridley sea turtle not be listed by the state at this time.

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Appendix

Washington Administrative Codes 232-12-011, -014, and -027

WAC 232-12-011 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished.

Protected wildlife are designated into three subcategories: Threatened, sensitive, and other.

(1) Threatened species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as threatened include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
western gray squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>
Steller (northern) sea lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>
North American lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>
bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
marbled murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>

(2) Sensitive species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as sensitive include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
Larch Mountain salamander	<i>Plethodon larselli</i>

(3) Other protected wildlife include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
cony or pika	<i>Ochotona princeps</i>
least chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>
yellow-pine chipmunk	<i>Tamias amoenus</i>
Townsend's chipmunk	<i>Tamias townsendii</i>
red-tailed chipmunk	<i>Tamias ruficaudus</i>
hoary marmot	<i>Marmota caligata</i>
Olympic marmot	<i>Marmota olympus</i>
Cascade golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus saturatus</i>
golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>
Washington ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus washingtoni</i>
red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
Douglas squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus douglasii</i>
northern flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i>
fisher	<i>Martes pennanti</i>
wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
painted turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>
California mountain kingsnake	<i>Lampropeltis zonata</i> ;

All birds not classified as game birds, predatory birds or endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species; all bats, except when found in or immediately adjacent to a dwelling or other occupied building; mammals of the order *Cetacea*, including whales, porpoises, and mammals of the order *Pinnipedia* not otherwise classified as endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species. This section shall not apply to hair seals and sea lions which are threatening to damage or are damaging commercial fishing gear being

utilized in a lawful manner or when said mammals are damaging or threatening to damage commercial fish being lawfully taken with commercial gear. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.020. 90-11-065 (Order 441), § 232-12-011, filed 5/15/90, effective 6/15/90. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.040. 89-11-061 (Order 392), § 232-12-011, filed 5/18/89; 82-19-026 (Order 192), § 232-12-011, filed 9/9/82; 81-22-002 (Order 174), § 232-12-011, filed 10/22/81; 81-12-029 (Order 165), § 232-12-011, filed 6/1/81.]

WAC 232-12-014 Wildlife classified as endangered species.

Endangered species include:

Columbian white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leucurus</i>
Mountain caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>
Blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
Bowhead whale	<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>
Finback whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
Gray whale	<i>Eschrichtius gibbosus</i>
Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Right whale	<i>Balaena glacialis</i>
Sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>
Sperm whale	<i>Physeter catodon</i>
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Aleutian Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis leucopareia</i>
Brown pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>
Leatherback sea turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
Grizzly bear	<i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>
Sea otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
White pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>
Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
Snowy plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Upland sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
Northern spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.020(6). 88-05-032 (Order 305), § 232-12-014, filed 2/12/88. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.040. 82-19-026 (Order 192), § 232-12-014, filed 9/9/82; 81-22-002 (Order 174), § 232-12-014, filed 10/22/81; 81-12-029 (Order 165), § 232-12-014, filed 6/1/81.]

WAC 232-12-297

Endangered, threatened, and sensitive wildlife species classification.

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this rule is to identify and classify native wildlife species that have need of protection and/or management to ensure their survival as free-ranging populations in Washington and to define the process by which listing, management, recovery, and delisting of a species can be achieved. These rules are established to ensure that consistent procedures and criteria are followed when classifying wildlife as endangered, or the protected wildlife subcategories threatened or sensitive.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

- 2.1 "Classify" and all derivatives means to list or delist wildlife species to or from endangered, or to or from the protected wildlife subcategories threatened or sensitive.
- 2.2 "List" and all derivatives means to change the classification status of a wildlife species to endangered, threatened, or sensitive.
- 2.3 "Delist" and its derivatives means to change the classification of endangered, threatened, or sensitive species to a classification other than endangered, threatened, or sensitive.
- 2.4 "Endangered" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is seriously threatened with extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state.
- 2.5 "Threatened" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout a significant portion of its range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats.
- 2.6 "Sensitive" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is vulnerable or declining and is likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of its range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats.
- 2.7 "Species" means any group of animals classified as a species or subspecies as commonly accepted by the scientific community.
- 2.8 "Native" means any wildlife species naturally occurring in Washington for purposes of breeding, resting, or foraging, excluding introduced species not found historically in this state.
- 2.9 "Significant portion of its range" means that portion of a species' range likely to be essential to the long term survival of the population in Washington.

LISTING CRITERIA

- 3.1 The commission shall list a wildlife species as endangered, threatened, or sensitive solely on the basis of the biological status of the species being considered, based on the preponderance of scientific data available, except as noted in section 3.4.
- 3.2 If a species is listed as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, the agency will recommend to the commission that it be listed as endangered or threatened as specified in section 9.1. If listed, the agency will proceed with development of a recovery plan pursuant to section 11.1.
- 3.3 Species may be listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive only when populations are in danger of failing, declining, or are

vulnerable, due to factors including but not restricted to limited numbers, disease, predation, exploitation, or habitat loss or change, pursuant to section 7.1.

- 3.4 Where a species of the class Insecta, based on substantial evidence, is determined to present an unreasonable risk to public health, the commission may make the determination that the species need not be listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive.

DELISTING CRITERIA

- 4.1 The commission shall delist a wildlife species from endangered, threatened, or sensitive solely on the basis of the biological status of the species being considered, based on the preponderance of scientific data available.
- 4.2 A species may be delisted from endangered, threatened, or sensitive only when populations are no longer in danger of failing, declining, are no longer vulnerable, pursuant to section 3.3, or meet recovery plan goals, and when it no longer meets the definitions in sections 2.4, 2.5, or 2.6.

INITIATION OF LISTING PROCESS

- 5.1 Any one of the following events may initiate the listing process.
 - 5.1.1 The agency determines that a species population may be in danger of failing, declining, or vulnerable, pursuant to section 3.3.
 - 5.1.2 A petition is received at the agency from an interested person. The petition should be addressed to the director. It should set forth specific evidence and scientific data which shows that the species may be failing, declining, or vulnerable, pursuant to section 3.3. Within 60 days, the agency shall either deny the petition, stating the reasons, or initiate the classification process.
 - 5.1.3 An emergency, as defined by the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW. The listing of any species previously classified under emergency rule shall be governed by the provisions of this section.
 - 5.1.4 The commission requests the agency review a species of concern.
- 5.2 Upon initiation of the listing process the agency shall publish a public notice in the Washington Register, and notify those parties who have expressed their interest to the department, announcing the initiation of the classification process and calling for scientific information relevant to the species status report under consideration pursuant to section 7.1.

INITIATION OF DELISTING PROCESS

- 6.1 Any one of the following events may initiate the delisting process:
 - 6.1.1 The agency determines that a species population may no longer be in danger of failing, declining, or vulnerable, pursuant to section 3.3.
 - 6.1.2 The agency receives a petition from an interested person. The petition should be addressed to the director. It should set forth specific evidence and scientific data which shows that the species may no longer be failing, declining, or vulnerable, pursuant to section 3.3. Within 60 days, the agency shall either deny the petition, stating the reasons, or initiate the delisting process.
 - 6.1.3 The commission requests the agency review a species of concern.
- 6.2 Upon initiation of the delisting process the agency shall publish a public notice in the Washington Register, and notify those parties who have expressed their interest to the department, announcing the initiation of the delisting process and calling for scientific information relevant to the species status report under consideration pursuant to section 7.1.

SPECIES STATUS REVIEW AND AGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Except in an emergency under 5.1.3 above, prior to making a classification recommendation to the commission, the agency shall prepare a preliminary species status report. The report will include a review of information relevant to the species' status in Washington and address factors affecting its status, including those given under section 3.3. The status report shall be reviewed by the public and scientific community. The status report will include, but not be limited to an analysis of:
 - 7.1.1 Historic, current, and future species population trends.
 - 7.1.2 Natural history, including ecological relationships (e.g., food habits, home range, habitat selection patterns).
 - 7.1.3 Historic and current habitat trends.
 - 7.1.4 Population demographics (e.g., survival and mortality rates, reproductive success) and their relationship to long term sustainability.
 - 7.1.5 Historic and current species management activities.
- 7.2 Except in an emergency under 5.1.3 above, the agency shall prepare recommendations for species classification, based upon scientific data contained in the status report. Documents shall be prepared to determine the environmental consequences of adopting the recommendations pursuant to requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).
- 7.3 For the purpose of delisting, the status report will include a review of recovery plan goals.

PUBLIC REVIEW

- 8.1 Except in an emergency under 5.1.3 above, prior to making a recommendation to the commission, the agency shall provide an opportunity for interested parties to submit new scientific data relevant to the status report, classification recommendation, and any SEPA findings.
 - 8.1.1 The agency shall allow at least 90 days for public comment.

- 8.1.2 The agency will hold at least one public meeting in each of its administrative regions during the public review period.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMISSION ACTION

- 9.1 After the close of the public comment period, the agency shall complete a final status report and classification recommendation. SEPA documents will be prepared, as necessary, for the final agency recommendation for classification. The classification recommendation will be presented to the commission for action. The final species status report, agency classification recommendation, and SEPA documents will be made available to the public at least 30 days prior to the commission meeting.
- 9.2 Notice of the proposed commission action will be published at least 30 days prior to the commission meeting.

PERIODIC SPECIES STATUS REVIEW

- 10.1 The agency shall conduct a review of each endangered, threatened, or sensitive wildlife species at least every five years after the date of its listing. This review shall include an update of the species status report to determine whether the status of the species warrants its current listing status or deserves reclassification.
 - 10.1.1 The agency shall notify any parties who have expressed their interest to the department of the periodic status review. This notice shall occur at least one year prior to end of the five year period required by section 10.1.
- 10.2 The status of all delisted species shall be reviewed at least once, five years following the date of delisting.
- 10.3 The department shall evaluate the necessity of changing the classification of the species being reviewed. The agency shall report its findings to the commission at a commission meeting. The agency shall notify the public of its findings at least 30 days prior to presenting the findings to the commission.
 - 10.3.1 If the agency determines that new information suggests that classification of a species should be changed from its present state, the agency shall initiate classification procedures provided for in these rules starting with section 5.1.
 - 10.3.2 If the agency determines that conditions have not changed significantly and that the classification of the species should remain unchanged, the agency shall recommend to the commission that the species being reviewed shall retain its present classification status.
- 10.4 Nothing in these rules shall be construed to automatically delist a species without formal commission action.

RECOVERY AND MANAGEMENT OF LISTED SPECIES

- 11.1 The agency shall write a recovery plan for species listed as endangered or threatened. The agency will write a management plan for species listed as sensitive. Recovery and management plans shall address the listing criteria described in sections 3.1 and 3.3, and shall include, but are not limited to:
- 11.1.1 Target population objectives.
 - 11.1.2 Criteria for reclassification.
 - 11.1.3 An implementation plan for reaching population objectives which will promote cooperative management and be sensitive to landowner needs and property rights. The plan will specify resources needed from and impacts to the department, other agencies (including federal, state, and local), tribes, landowners, and other interest groups. The plan shall consider various approaches to meeting recovery objectives including, but not limited to regulation, mitigation, acquisition, incentive, and compensation mechanisms.
 - 11.1.4 Public education needs.
 - 11.1.5 A species monitoring plan, which requires periodic review to allow the incorporation of new information into the status report.
- 11.2 Preparation of recovery and management plans will be initiated by the agency within one year after the date of listing.
- 11.2.1 Recovery and management plans for species listed prior to 1990 or during the five years following the adoption of these rules shall be completed within five years after the date of listing or adoption of these rules, whichever comes later. Development of recovery plans for endangered species will receive higher priority than threatened or sensitive species.
 - 11.2.2 Recovery and management plans for species listed after five years following the adoption of these rules shall be completed within three years after the date of listing.
 - 11.2.3 The agency will publish a notice in the Washington Register and notify any parties who have expressed interest to the department interested parties of the initiation of recovery plan development.
 - 11.2.4 If the deadlines defined in sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 are not met the department shall notify the public and report the reasons for missing the deadline and the strategy for completing the plan at a commission meeting. The intent of this section is to recognize current department personnel resources are limiting and that development of recovery plans for some of the species may require significant involvement by interests outside of the department, and therefore take longer to complete.
- 11.3 The agency shall provide an opportunity for interested public to comment on the recovery plan and any SEPA documents.

CLASSIFICATION PROCEDURES REVIEW

- 12.1 The agency and an ad hoc public group with members representing a broad spectrum of interests, shall meet as needed to accomplish the following:
- 12.1.1 Monitor the progress of the development of recovery and management plans and status reviews, highlight problems, and make recommendations to the department and other interested parties to improve the effectiveness of these processes.
 - 12.1.2 Review these classification procedures six years after the adoption of these rules and report its findings to the commission.

AUTHORITY

- 13.1 The commission has the authority to classify wildlife as endangered under RCW 77.12.020. Species classified as endangered are listed under WAC 232-12-014, as amended.
- 13.2 Threatened and sensitive species shall be classified as subcategories of protected wildlife. The commission has the authority to classify wildlife as protected under RCW 77.12.020. Species classified as protected are listed under WAC 232-12-011, as amended. [Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.020. 90-11-066 (Order 442), § 232-12-297, filed 5/15/90, effective 6/15/90.]

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will provide equal opportunities to all potential and existing employees without regard to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran's status. The department receives Federal Aid for fish and wildlife restoration.

The department is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any department program, activity, or facility, or if you want further information about Title VI or Section 504, write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia WA 98501-1091.



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